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[For data on five nativistic movements see category 668.]

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# FIVE NEW RELIGIOUS CULTS IN BRITISH NEW GUINEA.

E. W. P. CHINNERY, F.R.A.I., AND
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## I.

### E. W. P. CHINNERY.

668 I HAVE recently been engaged in observing the origin of two religous cults known as "Kava-Keva" and "Kekesi." They are animistic practices that, notwithstanding their prohibition, have already become powerful, and extend from the Gira River (8° S. lat.) to Buna Bay.[1]

769 774 The belief in ghosts and spirits is a predominant characteristic of the northern native. In almost every tribe I have observed the propitiation of family ghosts with individual offerings of food by ordinary persons to secure the vitality of their food supply, and by sorcerers to stimulate [787] their charms. Ghosts are invoked during ceremonies by divination to reveal crimes and criminals. Food offerings to ghosts are made during death feasts and during certain initiation rites. The house of initiation and the paraphernalia of [778] the dance are believed to have spiritual powers, and when the paraphernalia are thrown into the river at the completion of the rites, they are invoked to smite the enemies of the dancers.

776 664 178 Yet, although the spirits and ghosts are legion, I had nowhere come across any conception of a supreme spirit until the outbreak of the Kava-Keva[2] movement, when the villages

[131] [1] It may be well to note that the Gira River opens at about 8° S. lat. on the north coast of British New Guinea, and that the mouth of the Mamba River is four miles to the south, both being in the Mambare Division. Buna is on the south of Holnicote (Gona) Bay, about 8° 37′ S. lat., and is in the Kumusi Division. Kororo, Mount Victory, is an active volcano, nearly 5000 feet in height, a little to the west of Cape Nelson, which is about 9° S. lat.

[158] [2] "Kava-Keva" is a Motuan word which is used extensively throughout the tribes of British New Guinea by adoption to express a condition of madness or irresponsibility either temporary or permanent.

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concerned discarded individual practices in favour of co-operation; or, more strictly, changed from the worship of individual ghosts to the worship of the "Food-Spirit." The Kava-Keva is, I understand, positively a new idea, and not an attempt to revive old customs. Whilst observing the Kava-Keva rites on the second occasion I invited Mr Copland King, a clergyman of the Anglican Mission, to attend with me, and he has since written a paper on the subject. Mr King and I are the only Europeans who witnessed the beginning of the Kava-Keva rites, and I alone witnessed the beginning of the Kekesi rites. The following account of the two cults is based upon information supplied to me by Boninia and Bia at the inception.

1. THE "KAVA-KEVA" RITES.—Boninia is an elderly native of Taututu, one of the villages of the Dowai-ia division of the Binandere tribe, on the lower Mamba River. He was a man of no reputation as a magician or prophet. Early, however, in 1914 he visited the other villages of his group—Gauoro (on the coast), Duvira, and Tsiu (up the river)—and announced that he had been "struck down" in his garden by the "Spirit of Taro" (the staple diet). He had been told, he said, to warn the people that their dilatory methods of cultivation had given displeasure, and that unless they observed a ritual which had been taught to him, the "Food-Spirit" would destroy their gardens and force them to live on sago. Boninia's message was received without enthusiasm, and the ritual was declined. Nothing more came of the incident until the following November, when a young girl named Dasiga, of the village of Gauoro, developed a condition of mental abnormality. For a day or two she was quite oblivious of her surroundings, and chanted mechanically a new song, which was identified as part of the ritual disclosed by the man Boninia. In response to the request of the people Boninia examined the girl, and, in conformity with his advice, she was taken into the gardens, and there, amongst the taro leaves, as he had foretold, the "Spirit left her," and she recovered her normal state. Two or three days later she returned to her village. Then, almost immediately, she relapsed into her Kava-Keva condition, and simultaneously one other Gauoro girl and four young men "were visited by the Spirit." A second messenger to Boninia found that the "sickness" had appeared in each of the villages of the group, and that several natives were "possessed" and under treatment by Boninia. The headmen of the group were considerably alarmed, and called a meeting in Gauoro. Here those who had been "visited" disclosed the communica-

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158 tions of the "Spirit." It was decided that the group villages,
669 acting co-operatively, should propitiate the "visitor," and that the rites taught to Boninia and others should be performed forthwith. So much spontaneity attended the services that on November 25th, when I witnessed the ritual, there were but few who remained uninitiated.

The ceremony, as I saw it, appeared to be controlled by Boninia. He invoked the presence of the "Spirit," and, to
[533] the rhythmic drumming of the younger men, he shouted repeatedly *Irie! Irie!* (which are not Binandere words), and gradually worked himself up into a frenzy. The excitement of watching his efforts became too much for some of those present, and in a second or two several men and women became, like him, "possessed." After the manner of drunken men they staggered through the village, falling over obstacles, bumping into trees and houses, their faces twitching and eyes rolling. They exhibited a stilted, jerky movement of arms and limbs and laboured respiration. With the palms of their hands outward, some shrieked, others sobbed, and many were silent. Those who were unaffected continued drumming and chanting in a low key the taro song which the "Spirit" had taught to Boninia. I noticed one of the drummers, who had previously been unvisited, gradually giving way to the feeling. He appeared at first to resist; but, after a short struggle, he displayed the symptoms of the "possession." He staggered a few feet, and then fell to the ground in a fit. The other drummers encircled him, and, changing to quick time, moved round him singing an ordinary food song. At this stage Boninia revived automatically, and treated the boy with vigorous rubbing and slapping, calling repeatedly in his ear *Do! do! do!* At length the boy responded and was placed upright. He was kept moving in order to prevent a relapse threatened by his puffed face and stupefied manner. Then the elder men were treated by Boninia, and they in turn revived the others with similar treatment. All of them appeared strained and drowsy for hours afterwards. During the ceremony those who remained unaffected appeared to be ill at ease, and many of the women exhibited great concern at the behaviour of their children, particularly the mother of the boy "visited" for the first time. The boy told me that the "Spirit" had taught him, when in the fit, the names of certain charms to plant in his garden, and had given him other information which would be passed on as general knowledge to the cult. On a second occasion I saw another man "visited" for the first time, and the procedure was similar throughout.

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Boninia informed me that the precautionary ritual is as follows:—"No weapons of war may be carried in gardens. Gardens are to receive the greatest attention, and to be well fenced and continually weeded. No food is to be wasted. That which cannot be eaten is to be given to the pigs, as also the garbage. Food is to be handled carefully, lest it should be bruised or broken. When cooked it is to be boiled in a vessel. The practice of burning food in the fire must be abandoned." 668 784

The song of the "Food-Spirit" is:—"*Ba taba Ai-adara!*" "*Ba porovi Ai-adara!*" *Ba* signifies taro, and *taba* and *porovi* varieties of the same. Each kind of taro is thus recited and followed by the song-words *Ai-adara* (in which words the worship lies). Following the song of the taro there comes the worship of the sugar-cane (*do*), "*Do beguma Ai-adara*," and of the banana (*bido*), "*Bido oira Ai-adara*," the varieties of both being mentioned. Other garden-foods follow in sequence. 668 534

In January 1915 Tongua of Duvira was passing a heap of taro lying in the sun outside the village of Buadi on the middle Gira River. The people of this village had not adopted the cult. Tongua fell into a fit, and on reviving, gathered the taro and placed it in shelter. At the same time he took the opportunity of disclosing the teachings of the "Food-Spirit," who he said was very angry with the person that had left the taro lying in the sun. 668 184

The practices I have been describing being undesirable were for a time abandoned. Each man who had been "visited" took a long swim in the Mamba River to shake off the "sickness." Boninia, however, informed me that it would not be possible for him to shake off the "sickness" so long as he remained on the Mamba, and that he had received permission to visit the Kumusi. My friend Mr Beaver and I visited the dancers in December, and requested them to perform the Kava-Keva, but they excused themselves on the ground that the "Spirit" had left them, and that the "sickness" was not a condition to be produced at will. As a general practice, the Kava-Keva no longer exists. But isolated cases have been noticed throughout the two divisions as far as Buna, and particularly in and around the headquarters of the Anglican Mission, which is near the mouth of the Mamba. The noted prophets of the various tribes and villages on the coast have adopted the "Spirit," and the Kava-Keva and Kekesi cults threaten to break out in strong force along the whole northern coast from the Gira to Buna at any time, the cults, however, maintaining their rivalry. 668 158 184

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668 787 2. The Kekesi Rites.—Closely following the commencement of the Food Worship on the lower Mamba, a curious movement was introduced to the people of the village Manau, on the coast near the mouth of the Gira River. These people were formerly of Gadara and Bebewa on the Mamba. The movement was introduced by one of their chief men, a [115] notorious sorcerer and a most plausible rogue, named Bia, who represented himself as the earthly agent of a Spirit calling itself Kekesi.

The man Bia himself gave me an account of the origin of the movement, and I reproduce here his own words. "Early in November 1914 I and my friend Yavevi were returning to Manau from Buna. We slept at the point opposite Mitre Rock. During the night I was visited by the Spirit of a man named Boinumbai, who died a long time ago at Gauoro village. I was told by this Spirit that a very powerful Spirit named Kekesi watched over all the people from the Mitre Rock (Kekesi) and controlled their food supply. Kekesi was a friend of Jesu Kerisu (Jesus Christ), and was able to see all that happened. Kekesi was going to make some laws for the people, and if they obeyed them, he would look after their interests, but if they disobeyed them, he would injure their food supply. Boinumbai then departed. A few nights later Boinumbai's Spirit again visited me at Manau, and with it came the Spirit that Boinumbai introduced as Kekesi, the big chief of food and a strong Spirit, 'all the same as Jesu Kerisu and Government,' whom he told me to listen carefully to and to take notice of. Kekesi sat down and commenced making a gurgling sound in his throat, all the while bouncing violently and rapidly up and down, but keeping his sitting attitude. I was very frightened until Kekesi stopped doing this. But Boinumbai told me not to be frightened, as Kekesi was reciting the laws which he wished to be introduced by me to the people on his behalf. When Kekesi had finished, Boinumbai gave me this interpretation of Kekesi's speech:—'You, Bia, are to tell the people I am their chief, and they must obey me in all things. My wishes will be conveyed through you to the people from time to time. Disobedience will mean the loss of his food supply to the defaulter. The people are to hear and obey the Government. The people are to observe the moral code of the tribe. Food is to be properly cultivated, and no wastage is desired by me. Songs in my praise are to be offered frequently. All must take part in these songs, and enact them in the manner I prescribe. The songs and manner of offering them are:

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| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Standing | Chorus . | . *Ba iso nav* (repeated several times). |
| Sitting | Solo . | . *Kekesi lolo na ba iso nau.* |
| Sitting | Chorus . | . *Iri-e! Iri-e! Iri-e! Ta ba Iri-e!* |
| Kneeling | Solo (slowly) | . *Koi ba Kekesi ba iu ba na Iubanawei ohi to.* |
| Standing | Chorus . | . *Ire-e! Ire-e! Ire-e!* |
| Kneeling (hands clasped and eyes closed) | Chorus . | . *Hallihusi! Hallibate! Hallikauni!* |
| Standing (with drums) | Chorus . | . *Manamba da ko-e*<br>*Kekesi da manamba da ko-e*<br>*Kesi da manamba da ko-e*<br>*Kekesi da manamba da ko-e.* |
| Kneeling (as above) | Chorus . | . *Hallihusi! Hallibate! Hallikauni!* |
| Standing (with drums) | Chorus . | . *Taba da manambi ko-e*<br>*Ovivi da manambi ko-e*<br>*Godara da manambi ko-e.* |

(Thus recite all names of taro in turn.)

Kesi is the name of the steamer in which I travel from place to place. And the songs I am giving you must be sung regularly by all the people, otherwise trouble will come to you. The vitality of your food supply depends upon the manner in which you obey my desires. When going to and from the gardens the people are not to straggle along, but to fall in, similar to the police working for the Government. The following commands may be given to the people whilst working in the garden or coming to and from the same:—*A kush! A sha! A shun man! A shun be! A hon de shen! A som!* These commands are to be issued by the man Yavevi.' This is all that was said to me on that occasion, and the two Spirits left me. Shortly afterwards Kekesi came by himself, and, in a different manner to his previous speaking, said the following:—'Wak kaise Dasiga kerere. Wai kaise Dasiga kerere! Kekesi Boinumbai kononini tai vavini konininio ato bos Kesi Jesu Kerisa ked kom turn bush etai taba kai sol manau giama vavini slem bush Jesu Kerisa Kekesi dugus igit goot dugus goot vork work gardini finati giama Dasiga nart Mamau soro sino Government Missionary all same Kekesi met Missionary taro sino.'[1] Kekesi's speech was not in the Binandere language. I understood it, and it means that one boy had stolen his brother's wife, and that Kekesi was very angry with him and desired me to tell him so. The man's name is Dasiga. Kekesi has not visited me since."

[1] This conversation appears to be an indiscriminate mixture of New Guinea words of various districts and of many words that are unknown, but are obviously inventions of Bia, as I proved when two days after taking them down phonetically I asked Bia to repeat to me the teachings and conversation of Kekesi. He pleaded "bad memory."

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668 I witnessed the rites of Kekesi on November 26, 1914. They were performed with every appearance of sincerity and fanaticism. The man Yavevi conducted the ceremony, and seemed to be under the hypnotic influence of the man Bia, who remained throughout silent and carefully watching us. When the proceedings at all dragged, Bia would instil enthusiasm by throwing himself into a fit of convulsions from the waist upwards, jumping violently up and down while remaining in a sitting posture, and babbling intelligibly, the saliva dropping from his mouth. In this condition he would be joined by Yavevi and some of the other men, whilst those remaining unaffected would redouble their efforts. Yavevi and Bia revived automatically, and Yavevi conducted the others through their prayer-like devotions.

[158]

The rites were forbidden in November, but shortly afterwards—in December and January—Bia paid stealthy visits to the villages of the Gira River. And at the end of December the whole of the people of the Gira from the coast to Tabara and the Eia River in the west were performing the Kekesi rites as described above, with additional songs.

[533]

*Gagara ba nato mi badari*
Girl taro mine with to grow up

*Taba oro gaingumena*
(Taro) greeting I have come to see

*Ba wariwari*
Taro leaves shaking in the wind

*Ba ro beroberobe*
Taro grow quickly

*Ba sipo-tau-iegi*
Taro daylight

Notwithstanding the prohibition, the rites have been introduced by Yavevi to the coastal tribes as far south as Buna Bay. Yavevi informed me, on one occasion, that he was influenced by Bia, and that he could not possibly refrain from indulging in fits when Bia was near him. On that account he was sent to Buna, where it was thought he would be beyond the influence of Bia. Yet shortly after leaving the Mambare he returned to Bia, and, upon once more reaching Buna, commenced the Kekesi teachings in that place.

E. W. P. CHINNERY.

Kikori.

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## II.

### A. C. Haddon.

The following article was written a year before receiving Mr Chinnery's communication. I think it advisable to let both papers appear together, as they throw light upon each other.

The natives of the Kumusi, and more especially of the Mambare Divisions, must be in an excited condition, for the new cults noted by Mr Chinnery do not seem to be related with the somewhat earlier cult to which I call attention, nor is there any evidence of the slightest connection between these and the abortive message of the Milne Bay "prophet." It is interesting to observe that M. Moszkowski[1] records a Messiah belief among the coast tribes of the Mamberamo, a river that opens by Cape D'Urville, in Netherlands New Guinea, at the eastern limit of Geelvink Bay. He says that there is everywhere met with amongst the coastal tribes a belief in Manseren Korēri, an ancient culture hero, and that the belief is certainly older than the first appearance of the missionaries. Very long ago there lived, according to this belief, a man endowed with supernatural and divine powers. He gave the Papuans laws and regulations, and founded the men's ceremonial houses. But, because the Papuans gradually neglected his commands, one day he vanished. Yet, so the legend runs, he will eventually return, and then everything will be renewed. Therefore is he called Manseren Korēri, the god at whose return everything will cast its skin.

An awakening of religious activity is a frequent characteristic of periods of social unrest. The weakening or disruption of the older social order may stimulate new and often bizarre ideals, and these may give rise to religious movements that strive to sanction social or political aspirations. Communities that feel themselves oppressed anticipate the emergence of a hero who will restore their prosperity and prestige. And when the people are imbued with religious fervour the expected hero will be regarded as a Messiah. Phenomena of this kind are well known in history, and are not unknown at the present day among peoples in all stages of civilisation.[2]

It is significant that even among the savages of New

[1] *Zeitsch. f. Ethnol.*, xliii., 1911, p. 327.

[2] The Ghost Dances of the Indians of the Plains of N. America, which partake of a Messianic character, may serve as an example.

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Guinea fresh forms of religious activity come into being from time to time definitely as a reaction against the encroachment of the white man. But the mainspring of others is at present obscure, and appears to be more distinctly related to purely native ideas. These cults afford a valid ground of argument against the very prevalent notion of the permanence of all native institutions and of the supposed disinclination of primitive peoples to adopt new ideas or new cults. In the five instances we are here concerned with, the movement has been stopped by the Government, so there are no means of telling how permanent they might have become. They illustrate, at all events, the methods by which cults have probably spread in the past, and, as I have previously suggested,[1] we have evidence elsewhere of a definite propaganda. Indeed, we might go further, and admit that savages may occasionally have a missionary zeal which impels them to impart to the benighted heathen the ceremonial or cult that yields to themselves so much satisfaction. The new observations of Mr Chinnery indicate nervous conditions which, so far as I am aware, have not been previously recorded of the natives of New Guinea, although they conform to what is well known in other parts of the world.

1. THE BAIGONA CULT.—The Baigona cult is of interest because "it illustrates the growth of a movement which is developing into a new religion before our eyes. The sorcery of Baigona seems to be of the kind generally known as white magic, like the Babalau of the Motu, but there is a danger that it may develop into systematic extortion."[2] A large snake, called Baigona, which lives on Keroro (Mount Victory), first became known by killing a man and making all the other people ill. Later it took a man named Maine to the top of Keroro, cut out his heart, dried it in the sun, and then placed it over the fire in its house, so that it would get well smoked. Remaining on the top of the mountain, Maine was initiated into the mysteries of Baigona, and given certain medicines that would cure all diseases. Thereupon he was allowed to return to his village, taking his heart with him, which he hung up under the verandah of his house. Amongst other instructions received by Maine from Baigona was one to the effect that he should proceed up the coast and in certain centres appoint other "Baigona men," all of whom were to be junior to himself. This he did, and there are "Baigonas" all along the

[1] *Reports of the Cambridge Anthropological Expedition to Torres Straits*, 1908, vi. pp. 44–46.

[2] Lieut.-Governor Murray, *Ann. Rep., Papua*, 1911–12, p. 14.

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coast as far as the old Anglo-German boundary and for a long way up the rivers of the Kumusi Division. Moreover, the cult is still spreading. Needless to say, the Baigonas have to pay for their instruction. One or two men in a village go through a period of tuition, and, on their return, initiate the rest of the villagers, not into the positions which they themselves hold, but into a belief in their new powers. This is effected by a ceremony in which the people are smeared over with some stuff from the bush, and the Baigona gives each one a smack and sends him to wash in the sea. The ceremony gets its name from the "washing." Dr Copland King has seen Baigonas use massage on a patient. They massage the arms, for instance, down to the fingers, and then, as they say, pull Baigona out from the finger tips. The young men of the village, standing round the patient, sing a song, which seems to be the usual string of meaningless words. Only two recognised drugs are used, —viz. *Euphorbia pilulifera*, the "asthma herb of Queensland," which is burnt with the coral when preparing lime for chewing with betel-nut, and *E. Drummondii*, also used medicinally by Australian settlers, and eaten with paw-paw when chewing the nut. Various other plants are employed as drugs, but only such as are beneficial. All this was obviously a very subtle move on the part of Maine. How can the Government interfere in such circumstances? At the same time, the Baigona have powers of life and death, because if they do not choose to give the patient these drugs, or, in other words, if the patient does not pay enough for them, he dies; for the Papuan, like most savages, is peculiarly susceptible to impression, and can fall sick, or even die, without any corresponding physical cause. The Baigona does not work in his garden. He will not drink plain water, but only coconut milk. He pays more attention to dressing his hair and decorating his face with red paint than other people; he has not much else to occupy his time, as either from fear or in payment his village companions do his garden work for him. Very often during the evening in the village the Baigona goes into a fit, passing into a trance. It begins with violent shivering, after which the man falls to the ground and becomes insensible, uttering spasmodic bursts of rapid talk. His people cover him with a mat, and sit around listening and applauding. Dr Copland King has not been able to make sense of what he says on such occasions, and does not know whether the people understand it either. The main feature of the cult is the prohibition to kill snakes, crocodiles, monitor lizards, and

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668 [784] sharks, as these are protected by the master-snake Baigona; the prohibition being enforced by heavy penalties.[1] On one occasion Mr Oelrichs ordered his police to fire at a crocodile out at sea. That night some of these men had a dream or vision; the Baigona came to them and said, "Why were you shooting at my friend? You can't be friends with me if you do that." Three of the police were laid up the next morning in consequence of this vision. Here is another instance. One morning a certain Mr Oates killed a snake. Mr Oelrichs noticed that the natives around him looked very grave, so he jokingly said, "Oates, you have killed a Baigona." That evening at 7.30, although there had been no rain all day, the whole parade ground was some feet under water, and at 9.30 there was a break away in the creek, and it swept Mr Oates' house, furniture, and the whole of his allotment into the sea, all he had left being what he stood up in. None of the houses and allotments on the other side were touched. "Could any native want anything more convincing than that?"[2] This new cult, which has taken deep root, appears to be purely a native growth; there is no evidence that it has borrowed anything from the white man.[3]

2. The Prophet of Milne Bay.—Towards the end of 1893 a prophet arose in Milne Bay, at the extreme south-east end of the island. This prophet was a young man named Tokerua (Mr Abel calls him Tokeriu), who lived in the village of Gabugabuna, on the north side of the bay. He made a great stir among the natives. At night-time he mused beneath a sacred tree, from the branches of which a Spirit spoke to him; in the morning his face was transfigured, and he looked like a man whose wits had left him. The message which he delivered was to the effect that during the following moon

[1] The Baigonas claim both to make rain and to prevent it from falling; they also deal in other matters appertaining to the natives, and are consulted by them.

[2] These details are taken from the *Annual Report, Papua*, 1911–12, pp. 129 ff. (A. E. Oelrichs), and 1912–13, pp. 154 ff. (Rev. Copland King, M.D.).

[3] A partial explanation of this cult may perhaps be found in the considerations urged by Sir William MacGregor: "In many places no native will kill a snake. Evidently snake cult is an ancient form of veneration and worship connected with ancestors over a large area of British New Guinea. Advantage is taken of this by the sorcerer in some districts, who does not scruple to threaten death by snake bite, and to encourage snakes about his premises." *Ann. Rep.*, 1897–98, p. 47. It is interesting to observe how a cult of this kind is copied elsewhere. *Cf.* Mr G. H. Nicholls' account of an old policeman, named Tai-iai, who, profiting by what his travels afield had taught him, set up as a sorcerer on the Gira River, and had his snakes, invisible to ordinary eyes, but nevertheless very deadly and real to any who obtained the ill-will of the sorcerer. See *Annual Report, Papua*, 1910–1911, p. 139.

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there would be a violent thunderstorm. From the black clouds would dart vivid flashes of lightning, and there would fall a deluge of rain. Then a furious gale was to arise which would work untold havoc in certain places along the coast. The foundations of the earth would be shaken, and, as a result of the earthquake, an eruption would take place in the middle of the bay between Wagawagā and Gabugabuna, causing a new island to appear above the waves. In consequence a tidal wave would arise and spread further desolation and engender the submergence of all the coasts thereabout for two or three months. Thus destruction would be the lot of the unbeliever, but those would be spared who complied with the behests of the Spirit, as transmitted by the prophet. First and foremost, no man might possess anything introduced by the *dimdim* (white man). He must part with his treasured match-boxes, tomahawks, knives, and other appliances, which rendered life pleasant or reduced toil; for these objects were the symbols of foreign domination, and in the new era old ways would be re-established. There would be a reversion to the stone age, implying the revival of ancient wont and custom and of the religion of their forefathers. New things must pass away, and the golden age of the past must be resuscitated in the present. As an outward and visible sign of the state of grace the faithful were to wear in their armlets a *bisare*, or long narrow ribbon of leaf that almost reached the ground. Finally, they were to burn their houses and take to the highest peaks in the ranges,—for, like the cities of the plain, the old habitations were to be swept out of existence by the catastrophes of nature. As the houses of foreigners are generally built close to the shore, it would seem as though the wheat was to be removed with the tares, since the tidal wave could scarcely be expected to discriminate between the two types of houses. The faithful villagers of Gabugabuna actually left their old village on the shore and built new houses not more than half a mile inland, but on the same level. They were told to go inland. And they did. But it did not occur to these faithful souls, or to their prophet, that the mundane laws of hydrostatics would inevitably cause their new abode to be flooded if the coast were submerged. Such is unreasoning faith. When the catastrophe was past, the wind would change to the south-east, the quarter from which blow refreshing winds during the greater part of the year, and the land would be covered with gardens of yams, taro, and other native food, and the trees would be laden with delicious fruits. The south-east wind would waft a huge vessel into their

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vicinity, crowded with the spirits of the dead. And the faithful, who alone would have escaped the previous horrors, would be reunited with their departed relatives and friends.[1] So firm was the belief of these trustful people in the truth of the promise that food was to be abundant in the immediate future, that all the food in their gardens was consumed and ordinary gardening operations ceased. Not only so. Three or four hundred of their beloved pigs were killed and eaten. And anyone who knows the value the natives put upon their pigs will realise what a test of faith it was. A sceptical and prosaic Government interned Tokerua in prison for two years. The prophecy was unfulfilled, and the disillusioned and impoverished people once more reverted to the task of earning their daily bread by the sweat of their brow.[2]

3. The German Wislin of Saibai.—In November 1914 I had the opportunity of investigating a new cult which had sprung up in Saibai, Torres Straits, and is spreading to other islands. My information was obtained mainly from Niki, a policeman, and was confirmed by Asa, a deacon, both of Saibai. So far as I could learn, the movement began in 1913, but it did not become organised until the spring of 1914. Wageba, Anu, and Sagaukus regard themselves as the headmen of the new religion, and they are known as "German Wislin."[3] They were spoken of as "generals" or "captains," evidently a reminiscence of the old native word *kuiku-garka*, headman, a term which was applied to a champion or leader in war. But they were distinctly stated not to be "King George's men." I think it was on Good Friday, 1914, that these leaders issued instructions for all the men on the island to go to the graveyard at about eight or nine o'clock at night. Both my informants went, although apparently at the time they disbelieved the new doctrine, and certainly disbelieve it now. They found it hard, however, to make a stand against a popular movement, especially seeing that, after all, there might be something in it. The fear of running counter to unknown forces is as strong in these people as it is amongst the credulous elsewhere. So real was their fear, that I could only get information by taking my informants apart from

[1] Tokerua was to form a new Government and have a steamer of his own after the style of the *Merrie England*, the Government yacht, only larger.

[2] I am indebted for the above information to the report of Mr R. J. Kennedy, Native Magistrate at Samarai, *Ann. Rep., Brit. New Guinea*, 1893–94, p. 71, and to *Savage Life in New Guinea*, by Rev. C. W. Abel, 1902, pp. 104–114.

[3] I do not know what this term means. The second word was sometimes pronounced "Wislun," and once it sounded like "Wesleyan."

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eavesdroppers. And even then they spoke in a low voice. One said, "altogether man growl very hard all the time" at them. They were suspects, and public opinion was being expressed in the usual manner by abuse and threatened violence, which they feared would become operative. They were informed that the leaders were sorry for them personally, and that their punishment would be executed by God or the *Markai* (spirits of the dead). One of them, who works on a "company" boat at swimming-diving for pearl shell, had been warned that if he persisted in his infidelity he would be killed by a shark. On arrival at the cemetery, wild ginger was chewed, spat on the hands, and rubbed on the face, arms, and body of each member of the congregation, the members of which stood in a circle around the graves of two men. The "German Wislin" asserted that the people would see the *Markai* that night, and many of them prayed aloud, while others "prayed in their hearts." The service consisted of prayer, exhortation, and singing. The people were told to cease from working, or to do as little as possible in their gardens and elsewhere, as all good things would be provided for them by the *Markai*, who possessed everything. Those who did not believe would not get any money, and those of them who had any would lose even that which they had. They were enjoined to possess their souls in patience and not to be sceptical or frivolous, as all would come right in the future. But the three leaders made the mistake of trying to strengthen the faith of their followers by fixing a date for the consummation of all things. Sometimes it was two weeks, or three weeks, or a month hence, or the following new moon. Yet the Spirits delayed their coming. On the great day, a steamer, named *Silūbloan*, crowded with the *Markai*, the spirits of dead relatives and friends, would come alongside a large jetty that would mysteriously appear at the western point of the island of Saibai. Once I was informed that the steamer came from Canaan. At all events, the *Markai* embarked at an island in the far west known as "German Town."[1] On its way the steamer would call first at Thursday Island, which in these days of British dominance is the "port of entry" for Torres Straits, as well as the centre of Government. There the *Markai* would fight and kill the white men, and thence the steamer would proceed to Saibai. The *Markai* were to bring with them everything which the heart of man

[1] Evidently a modern version of the old belief that the ghosts of the dead went to Kibu, a mythical island in the west, where they looked and behaved exactly as they did when they were alive.

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could desire,—money, flour, calico, tomahawks, knives, and so forth. White and coloured men were all alike and equal. In the beginning God gave all things to everyone on earth, but the good things of life had been filched by the white man, and as he would not restore to the natives the share that was due to them, the latter would be forced to help themselves. At the conclusion of the service the people saluted and prayed to God to give them good sense and more light. He was entreated to show them the right way to get money and other material benefits. The services take place twice a week, on Friday and Sunday nights. The people do not let the South Sea teacher see them, nor do they allow him to stop them. I gathered that some women also attend the meetings. One feature of the cult is a reversion to the ancient belief in the efficacy of certain inanimate objects to bring good fortune. A man on finding a rounded stone, or a stone of unusual shape, or with curious markings, or it may be some other arresting object, concludes that it has been given to him by the *Markai*. But, in order to satisfy himself, he takes it at night to one of the leaders and asks him to find out whether it is properly authenticated. The next morning he goes to a "German Wislin," who informs him that he has received a message from "German Town," stating the measure of virtue the object in question possesses. And he mentions the name of the person for whom the *Markai* designed the object, who, however, need not necessarily be the finder. On returning the stone the leader says, "God bless you. By-and-by something good will happen to you, and you will have more power." When the leaders instruct the people, or tell them about the stone, or whatever it may be, they do not fall into a trance or anything of that sort, but are wide awake, and speak in the ordinary way. Fees are charged for information and advice, and by these means the "German Wislins" are making the most of the occasion.

The cult has some resemblance to that which arose in Milne Bay, but there is not the slightest reason for thinking that the one has any connection with the other. Not only is there a considerable interval of time between them, there is also a considerable interval of space, Saibai being some five hundred and sixty miles distant from Milne Bay. The languages spoken in the two places are absolutely different; and there is no ground for believing that a native of Milne Bay has ever visited Saibai, though it is possible that a Saibai man may have formed one of a crew of a pearl-shelling boat which may have sailed from Thursday Island to the extreme south-east of New Guinea.

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east of New Guinea. I think we can confidently attribute the coincidences to the fact that the two fishing populations have been affected in an analogous manner by the social unrest, and have also been more or less imbued with the Christian religion, the latter being especially evident in the Saibai cult. The prayers and exhortations were described to me as being "all the same as missionary talk," and the Christian God is acknowledged as supreme, working His will mainly through the instrumentality of the Spirits of dead islanders. One expression that was used, "Jesus on top, Jesus here," was meant to convey the idea that, though Jesus is in heaven, he is at the same time on earth, in communion with the believers in the new doctrine. There is no doubt that the leaders have so interwoven ideas derived from the Christian religion with racial animosity and a recrudescence of the vague ancestor cult of heathen times as to deceive, if not themselves, at all events their fellow islanders.

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